

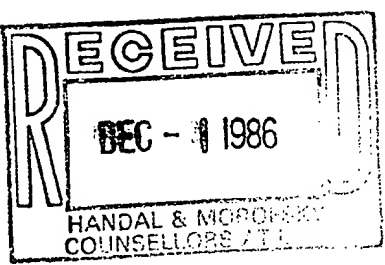


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A METHOD TO CONVERT TWO-DIMENSIONAL MOTION PICTURES

FOR THREE-DIMENSIONAL SYSTEMS

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TECHNICAL FIELD

The invention relates to a method for converting existing film or videotape motion pictures to a form that can be used with three-dimensional systems for broadcast or exhibition.

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BACKGROUND ART

30 With the advent of stereophonic sound, various techniques were developed to convert or 're-process' existing monophonic programs for stereophonic broadcast or recording systems. These included modifying the equilization, phase or tonal qualities of sepearte copies of the monophonic program for the left and right channels.

35 While true stereophonic or binaural effects may not have been

1 achieved, the effects were much improved over feeding the  
identical monophonic signal to both channels.

5 Similarly, with the almost universal use of color production,  
exhibition and broadcast systems for motion pictures and  
television, systems have been developed to convert existing  
monochrome or black & white materials to color programs. Such a  
system is described in applicant Geshwind's patent number  
4,606,625, issued August 19, 1986. The results of these colorized  
10 products, while not always identical to true color motion  
pictures, are more suitable than black & white for color systems.

There have been a number of systems for exhibition or display of  
left- and right-eye pairs of binocular motion pictures. Early  
15 systems required two completely redundant projection or display  
systems; e.g. two film projectors or CRT television displays,  
each routed to one eye via mirrors. Other systems require either  
complicated and expensive projection or display systems, or  
expensive 'glasses' to deliver two separate images. For example:

20 red- and green-tinted monochrome images are both projected  
or displayed to be viewed through glasses with left and  
right lenses tinted either red or green;

25 two full-color images are projected through mutually  
perpendicular polarized filters and viewed through glasses  
with lenses that are also polarized in the same manner;

30 left and right images are displayed on alternate odd and  
even fields (or frames) of a standard (or high scan rate)  
television CRT and are viewed through 'glasses' with  
shutters (either rotating blades or flickering LCDs, for  
example) that alternate the view of left and right eyes in  
synchrony with the odd or even fields of the CRT.

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- 1 Of the above systems, the second is not at all usable with  
standard home television receivers, the third requires very  
expensive 'glasses' and may flicker with standard home receivers,  
and the first produces only strangely tinted monochrome images.  
5 Further, none of the systems may be broadcast over standard  
television for unimpeded viewing without special glasses.

Thus, until now, compatible (i.e., viewable as two-dimensional,  
without glasses) home reception of 3-D images was not possible.  
10 However, a new system, which takes advantage of differential  
processing of left- and right-eye images in the human perceptual  
system, delivers a composite image on a standard home television  
receiver that can be viewed as a normal 2-D picture without  
glasses. Very inexpensive glasses, with one light and one dark  
15 lens, accentuate the differential processing of the image, as  
viewed by each eye, to produce a 3-D depth effect.

Practical, inexpensive, compatible (with standard TV) 3-D  
television may now become widespread. In addition to materials  
20 specifically produced for the new system (or other 3-D systems)  
conversion of standard 2-D programs to 3-D format would provide  
additional product to broadcast using the new compatible system  
(or for other 3-D projection systems).

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#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Applicant Handal's previous application, number 479,679, filed  
30 March 28, 1983 and now abandoned, relates a process and apparatus  
for deriving left- and right-eye pairs of binocular images, from  
certain types of two dimensional film materials. In particular,  
the materials must consist of separate foreground and background  
elements, such as cartoon animation cells and background art. By  
35 taking into account the parallax between scenes as viewed by the

1 left and right eyes, two images are prepared where foreground  
elements are shifted with respect to background elements by an  
amount that indicates their depth in the third dimension. Two-  
dimensional motion pictures that consist of a series of single  
5 composite images could not be converted to three-dimensional  
format, by this technique, without first being separated into  
various background and foreground elements.

Once committed to two-dimensional motion pictures, the separation  
10 and depth information for various scene elements, in the third  
dimension, are lost. Thus, the separation of two-dimensional  
image sequences into individual image elements and the generation  
of three-dimensional depth information for each such image  
element are not simple or trivial tasks, and are the further  
15 subject of the instant invention.

In accordance with the invention, standard two-dimensional motion  
picture film or videotape may be converted or processed, for use  
with three-dimensional exhibition or transmission systems, so as  
20 to exhibit at least some three-dimensional or depth character-  
istics. Separation of a single 2-D image stream into diverse  
elements is accomplished by a computer assisted, human operated  
system. (If working from discrete 2-D film sub-components, such  
as animation elements, the separation step may be omitted.) Depth  
25 information is assigned to various elements by a combination of  
human decisions and/or computer analyses and resulting images of  
three-dimensional format are produced under computer control.

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#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

A method for carrying out the invention is described in the  
accompanying drawings in which:

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1 available for direct 3-D photography. After human identification  
of individual image elements and depth assignment, the computer  
generates, from frame 10, a pair of coordinated left 30 and right  
40 images with backgrounds 31 and 41, circles 32 and 42, and  
5 squares 33 and 43 respectively. Note that the relative positions  
of the square and circle are different in the left and right  
images; this situation is similar to the parallax that might  
result between left- and right-eye views if one were to have  
viewed the original scene 10 directly. Three-dimensional format  
10 frame 50 is generated by encoding the information in the left 30  
and right 40 image pair, in a manner consistent with any one of a  
number of existing 3-D systems. The specific operation of these  
various 3-D systems is not the subject of the instant invention.

15 Alternately, the steps of generating and encoding 3-D information  
may be combined such that 3-D format frame 50 may be processed  
directly from 2-D frame 20 without generating left 30 and right  
40 image pairs. In either case, 3-D format frame 50 when viewed  
by human 60 through 3-D glasses 70 is perceived as 3-D scene 80,  
20 containing elements 81, 82 and 83, which has at least some of the  
3-D characteristics of original 3-D scene 10.

Various systems for the encoding, display, projection, recording,  
transmission or viewing of 3-D images exist, and new systems may  
25 be developed. Specifically, various techniques for specifying,  
encoding and viewing 3-D information may now, or come to, exist,  
which do not make use of parallax offset and/or left and right  
image pairs and/or viewing glasses, or which embody new  
techniques or changes and improvements to current systems.  
30 Further, such systems may integrate information from more than  
one 2-D source frame 20 into a single resultant 3-D frame 50. The  
specifics of operation of such systems is not the subject of the  
instant invention, however, preparation of 2-D program material  
for such systems is.

1 The offsets shown for elements 31, 32 and 33 in left frame 30 and  
elements 41, 42 and 43 in right frame 40 are meant to be  
illustrative and do not necessarily follow the correct rules for  
image parallax. In fact, depending upon where viewer attention is  
5 meant to be centered, different rules may apply. For example, one  
technique is to give no parallax offset to far background  
elements and to give progressively more parallax offset to  
objects as they get closer. Alternately, attention may be  
centered in the mid-ground with no parallax offset to mid-range  
10 objects, some parallax offset to close-range objects and reverse  
parallax offset to far-range objects. The particular placement of  
objects and attention point in the 3-D scene is as much an art as  
a science and is critical to the enjoyment of 3-D programs and,  
in any event, is not meant to be the subject of this invention.

15 Figure 2 shows a schematic of a system to implement the instant  
invention. A 2-D film or video image 10 is input to a video  
monitor 20 and to the scanning portion 41 of frame buffer 40.  
Video monitor 20 is capable of displaying either the 2-D image  
being input 10 or the output from display portion 42 of frame  
20 buffer 40.

Frame buffer 40 consists of an image scanner 41 which can convert  
the input image into digital form to be stored in a portion of  
25 frame buffer memory section 44, a display section 42 which  
creates a video image from the contents of a portion of memory  
section 44, and a computer interface section 43 which allows the  
computer CPU 50 to read from and write to the memory section 44.

30 Graphic input tablet 30 and stylus 35 allow the human operator to  
input position information to the computer 50 which can indicate  
the outline of individual image elements, choice of a specific  
image element or part of an image element, depth specification,  
choice of one of a number of functions offered on a 'menu', or  
35 other information. An image cursor can be displayed on monitor 20

1 by frame buffer 40 to visually indicate the location or status of  
the input from the tablet 30 and pen 35. Text and numeric  
information can also be input by the operator on keyboard 55.

5 Computer CPU 50 is equipped with software which allows it to  
interpret the commands and input from the human operator, and to  
process the digitized 2-D information input from 2-D frame 10  
into digital 3-D frame information, based on said human commands  
and input. Said digital 3-D frame information is then output by  
10 output interface 60 (which may be similar to frame buffer 40 or  
of some other design) to a videotape recorder 70 or to a film  
recorder 75, capable of recording 3-D format frames.

The system as described above operates as follows. A frame of the  
15 2-D program is displayed on the video monitor for viewing by the  
human operator. With the tablet and stylus the operator outlines  
various 2-D image areas to indicate to the computer the  
boundaries of various image elements to be separately processed.  
(For materials, such as animation components, that already exist  
20 as separate elements, the previous stage of the process may be  
skipped.) Depth position information, in the third dimension, is  
determined for each image element, by a combination of operator  
input and computer analysis. Left and right image pairs or a 3-D  
composite image is processed by the computer, from the 2-D input  
25 image, based on the computer software and operator instructions.  
Depending upon the particular 3-D system to be used, left- and  
right-image pairs may or may not be the final stage or an  
intermediate stage or bypassed entirely. Further, for some 3-D  
systems, information from more than one 2-D source frame may be  
30 combined into one 3-D frame (or frame pair). In any event, the  
final 3-D information is then collected on a videotape or film  
recorder. The process is then repeated for additional 2-D frames.

Each image element may be given a uniform depth designation which  
35 may cause the perception of 'cardboard cut-out' characters.



1 Alternately, different portions of a single image element may be  
given different depth designations with the computer interpolating depth coordinates over the entire element. For example, an  
5 image element positioned diagonally in a frame may have its right  
edge designated to be closer than its left edge. Alternately, one  
feature of an image element, say a person's nose in a close-up,  
might be designated as being closer than the rest of the image  
10 element. In such manner, the computer would be instructed to  
interpolate and process depth information over the entire image  
element. Such processing of the image element, in accordance with  
varying depth information, may result in the stretching, skewing  
or other distortion of the image element.

Depth interpolation may also be carried out over time, between  
15 frames. For example, an image element might be designated to be  
close in one frame and to be far away in a later frame. The depth  
of the image element may be interpolated for the frames between  
the two designated frames. Further, the position of the image  
element in the two dimensions of the film frame, and the shape of  
20 the outline separating the image element from the rest of the  
source image, may also be interpolated over time, between frames.  
Linear and non-linear interpolation techniques are well known and  
may be readily applied.

25 It is also possible to add random noise to the depth information  
to eliminate the appearance of flat objects moving in space and  
to help achieve greater realism.

For a particular image element, depth position may be derived by  
30 the computer, alone or with operator input, by measuring the size  
of the image element in a frame. For example, once a person were  
outlined, his overall height in the 2-D film frame might be  
extracted by the computer as an indication of depth distance.  
Using knowledge, or making assumptions, about the object's real  
35 size, and the characteristics of the camera and lens, the

1 distance of the object from the camera may be calculated by  
applying well known principles of perspective and optics.  
Alternately, if overall size cannot be easily extracted by the  
computer, key points might be indicated by the operator for the  
5 computer to measure. Comparing the change of size of an image  
element in several frames will provide information about the  
movement of the object in the third dimension.

It should be noted that horizontal parallax offsets are, by far,  
10 more obvious, due to the fact that our eyes are separated in the  
horizontal direction. However, vertical offset differences  
between left- and right-eye views may also be appropriate.

As various image elements are separated and assigned depth  
15 values, a situation develops where diverse objects exist in a  
'three-dimensional space' within the computer. It should be noted  
that, in order to display a realistic representation of the  
entire scene, forwardmost objects must obscure all or part of  
rearmost objects with which they overlap (except in the case  
20 where a forwardmost object were transparent). When generating  
left- and right-eye views, the pattern of overlap of image  
elements, and thus the pattern of obscuring of image elements  
will, in general, be different. Further, for image elements that  
have been assigned non-uniform depth values (e.g., image elements  
25 that are not flat or not in a plane perpendicular to the third  
dimension) the intersection between these image elements, for the  
purpose of one obscuring the other, may be non-trivial to  
calculate. However, there are well known techniques, that have  
been developed for computer image synthesis, that allow for the  
30 sorting, intersection and display of diverse, overlapping 3-D  
image elements.

As image elements are separated from background scenes or each  
other, holes may develop. The computer software will compensate  
35 for this by filling in missing information in one particular 2-D

1 frame with the equivalent part of the image element from earlier  
or later frames whenever possible. Alternately, material to 'plug  
holes' may be created by the operator or by the computer from  
adjacent areas or may be newly synthesized. Further, as two image  
5 elements are separated from each other, the forwardmost of the two  
may be moved closer to the viewer; hence, it may be appropriate  
to make it larger. Thus, the increased size may cover the gaps in  
the rearmost element of the two.

10 As part of the processing to be performed on the 2-D source  
image, individual image elements or composite images, additional  
effects may be programmed into the computer to heighten the sense  
of depth. For example, shadows cast by one image element on  
another element or the background may be calculated and inserted;  
15 far distant landscape elements may be made hazy or bluish to  
indicate remoteness; different image elements may be blurred or  
sharpened to simulate depth-of-field; or, the distance between  
close objects may be exaggerated to emphasize their separation.  
There are, of course, other technical or artistic techniques that  
20 can be used to indicate depth in an image and which may also be  
incorporated into the image processing programs and would  
therefore be part of the invention as described herein.  
Therefore, the above examples are illustrative and should not be  
construed as limiting the scope of the invention. Alternately,  
25 depth information may be intentionally distorted for effect or  
for artistic purposes.

Improvements may be made to the final product by including new  
image elements that were not part of the original 2-D source  
30 image. These could include 2-D image elements that are then  
assigned depth values, 3-D image elements created by 3-D  
photography and then entered into the computer as left- and  
right-image pairs, for example, or synthetic 3-D computer  
generated graphics. In particular, since computer generated image  
35 elements can be created with depth information, they can be

1 easily integrated into the overall 3-D scene with vivid effect.  
For example, a 3-D laser blast could be created by computer image  
synthesis such that it would in turn obscure and be obscured by  
other image elements in an appropriate manner, and might even be  
5 created so as to appear to continue beyond the front of the  
screen into 'viewer space'.

Animated film components usually have relatively few background  
paintings, which are kept separate from the animated characters  
10 in the foreground. For these, or for live 2-D filmed scenes, once  
the foreground elements have been separated from the background,  
the flat 2-D backgrounds may be replaced by 3-D backgrounds. The  
3-D backgrounds might consist of computer generated graphics, in  
which case depth information for the various elements of the  
15 background would be available at the time of the background  
creation. Alternately, 3-D backgrounds might be created using 3-D  
photography, in which case depth information for the background  
elements may be derived, by the computer, from the comparison of  
the left- and right-image pairs of the 3-D background photographs  
20 and applying known image processing and pattern recognition  
techniques. Alternately, depth information to create 3-D  
backgrounds may be specified otherwise by operator input and/or  
computer processing. Once depth information is available for the  
various background elements, it may be compared to depth information  
25 for the other image elements with which it is to be combined in  
each frame. Thus, the 3-D background may itself have some depth  
and, in effect, be a 'set' within which other image elements may  
be positioned in front of, behind or intersecting various  
background elements for added realism.

30 It should be noted that, intended purpose and software algorithms  
aside, the design and operation of the 3-D conversion system  
described herein has many similarities with the black & white  
footage colorization system described in applicant Geshwind's  
35 patent 4,606,625. They are both computer-aided systems which

1 display standard film images to an operator, allow the operator  
to input information seperating various image elements within the  
frame, allow the operator to specify attributes (color in one  
case, depth in the other) for the image elements, and cause the  
5 computer to process new image frames from the original, based on  
the operator input. Thus, the processing of 2-D black and white  
footage to add both color and depth information would be much  
more efficient than implementing each process seperately.

10 The scope of the instant invention is the conversion or  
processing of 2-D program material for use with any 3-D  
exhibition or distribution system now in use or later developed,  
but not the specific method of operation of any particular 3-D  
system.

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It will thus be seen that the objects set forth above, among  
those made apparent from the proceeding description, are  
efficiently attained and certain changes may be made in carrying  
out the above method and in the construction set forth.

20 Accordingly, it is intended that all matter contained in the  
above description or shown in the accompanying figures shall be  
interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense.

Now that the invention has been described, what is claimed as new  
25 and desired to be secured by Letters Patent is:

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